



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Book review: F. Kolb, Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike

Citation for published version:

Kelly, G 2003, 'Book review: F. Kolb, Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike', *The Journal of Roman Studies* (JRS), vol. 93, pp. 416-417. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3184758>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.2307/3184758](https://doi.org/10.2307/3184758)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

The Journal of Roman Studies (JRS)

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Kelly, G. (2003). Book review: F. Kolb, Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike. *Journal of Roman Studies*, 93, 416-417doi: 10.2307/3184758

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.





Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike by F. Kolb

Review by: Gavin Kelly

The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 93 (2003), pp. 416–417

Published by: [Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3184758>

Accessed: 19/12/2013 04:35

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Roman Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

of late Roman men. The material K. collects may, however, prompt scholars to look more closely at the 'unmanly' eunuchs of the fourth century.

University of Manchester

CONRAD LEYSER

F. KOLB, *HERRSCHERIDEOLOGIE IN DER SPÄTANTIKE* (Studienbücher Geschichte und Kultur der Alten Welt). Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001. Pp. 274, 48 illus. ISBN 3-05-003432-7. €19.80.

Kolb has used his excellent knowledge of late Roman texts and material remains to produce an authoritative study of the ceremonies and images used to portray and justify imperial power from the reign of Diocletian onwards. A brief introduction and conclusion frame three substantial chapters (2–4) on Diocletian and the Tetrarchs, Constantine, and the slow Christianization of imperial ideology thereafter. Though K. disavows comprehensiveness, he can only be believed in ch. 4, where despite occasional references as late as Justinian or Heraclius, the focus is largely on the fourth century. The same chronological limit applies in twenty-seven illustrated appendices of materials (143–254) to which he frequently refers throughout the main text. In these he discusses literary texts, coins, statuary, paintings, and archaeological remains, sparing no detail in taking his readers through the subtleties and variations of imperial iconography (which, it should be said, are not always visible on the small black and white plates). On the well and the lesser known alike, the porphyry statues of the Tetrarchs in Venice or Galerius' palace in Gamzigrad, he is invariably perceptive and frequently innovative. Any feeling that the appendices are laborious must be balanced by an acknowledgement of their exemplary clarity and potential for use in teaching.

K. believes that the *Herrscherideologie* of the Late Empire has generally been seen as an after-note or a prelude, rather than in its own right: his careful and chronologically ordered reading of the sources nevertheless lets beginnings and continuities be seen. So in his chapter on the tetrarchic system (25–58), it is striking how many individual ways in which power was represented and justified under the so-called dominate are preceded under earlier emperors. Diocletian's tetrarchy, on which K. has written well before, is presented as a planned constitution rather than mere muddling through, revolutionary but a coherent combination of pre-existent ideas of monarchy. Though K. is not writing a political history, one might regret the almost complete lack of mention of the usurpers who interrupted Tetrarchic harmony (most obviously Carausius). The period gains too much order and serenity and a false contrast is implied with the reign of the usurping tetrarch who destroyed the system.

Not that K.'s sane and balanced account of Constantine (59–89) denies continuity from the Tetrarchy on various levels: indeed he avoids many dangers by focusing on Constantine's representation rather than his psyche. The detailed study shows the slow gradations in the re-establishment of a hereditary ideal of kingship. K. writes well on the tact with which Christian sensibilities were conciliated and on how far deepening conciliation can be seen as Christianization. The next chapter (91–138) traces the same processes from the successors of Constantine to the neutered descendants of Theodosius and beyond: perhaps something is lost in the wider time-span, but then how long imperial ideology remained predominantly secular is a consistent theme. Throughout, K. is commendably unworried by the thought that ideologies can be inconsistent. However, his focus on the origins and nuanced meanings of diadems, orbs, purple and the trappings of monarchy perhaps leads him to underestimate how their temporary absence can also constitute effective public relations, as practised by Julian or even by Theodosius in his famous penance before Ambrose (137).

K. is sometimes overly concerned with responding to existing bibliography. In A.D. 360 the Caesar Julian's army surrounded his headquarters in Paris and 'forcibly' proclaimed him Augustus. Many have speculated on how Julian managed the event, and K. is illuminating (208–14, cf. 91–102) when explaining how apparently casual details in Ammianus' account (20.4–5) show Julian emulating the various requirements of a correct proclamation. Thus he waited till dawn before accepting the acclamation, was not raised on a tribunal but on a soldier's shield, had no diadem to hand, which would have implied planning, but used a military torque instead (these last two 'barbarian' features are attested in subsequent proclamations). A ceremony with speeches the following day on a tribunal on a plain outside the city attempted to lend his usurpation more of the trappings of legitimacy. It is a pity this fascinating discussion is structured around the tedious question of whether Julian's proclamation should be termed usurpation, and a pity that K. wrongly attributes the same pedantic legalism to Ammianus. That historian let his readers know the realities of the situation, but, though capable of casting doubt on imperial legitimacy (Jovian, Procopius), he did not in Julian's case.

Errors are few. A forgivable typo twice has Constans rather than Constantine II killed in A.D. 340 (244, 253), and two passages show K. confused on the age of Valentinian II (102, 223). K. has written an excellent textbook, and much more.

Peterhouse, Cambridge

GAVIN KELLY

D. CANER, *WANDERING, BEGGING MONKS: SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AND THE PROMOTION OF MONASTICISM IN LATE ANTIQUITY*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Pp. xiv + 325, map. ISBN 0-520-23324-7. US\$65.00/£45.00.

The ascetic movement has been well documented as one of the most obvious, and indeed one of the most interesting manifestations of early Christianity. The rigid codes of self denial as espoused by the likes of St Anthony, Simeon Stylites, and female ascetics such as Macrina and Melania the Younger, have captured the imagination of scholars, and indeed have provided useful insights into some of the processes by which Christianity established a popular appeal for itself.

Daniel Caner's work provides another side of the story. While some of the best known ascetics were applauded for their feats of endurance, and seemed to epitomize the values of Christianity, there were many more who claimed to uphold the ascetic way of life, but who in fact fell foul of both spiritual and civic authorities for the ways in which they chose to practise and demonstrate their piety.

C. offers us a survey of what he calls 'wandering and begging' monks between 360 and 451 C.E. As the ascetic movement emerged from its first flush of youth, a need for rules and regulations became apparent, particularly as more and more people took up the ascetic mantle. Loose monastic organizations and structures came into existence, but differences of interpretation led to schisms and difficulties across these communities. These problems were most apparent when monks took a particularly literal interpretation of Gospel calls to renounce all worldly cares in order to follow God. C. provides intriguing portraits of fourth- and fifth-century monks who achieved celebrity status through their refusal to interact with the secular world in order to ensure their own survival. These were characters who saw Christ's assurance that God would provide all their needs in the same way as he looked after the lilies in the field as a key to their existence in the cities and deserts of the later Roman Empire.

While medieval monasticism evolved in a system of rules to ensure that monks laboured for their daily bread, this approach was by no means universal in the period under C.'s consideration. Instead he brings to our attention many monks who felt that manual labour was in fact a distraction from their efforts to achieve spiritual closeness with God, and they relied on the kindness of strangers to provide food, drink, and shelter wherever they went.

But this had both secular and spiritual implications, which C. dwells on at length. On a very practical level, if a large party of monks — and indeed they seem to have travelled in packs — descended on an urban area for an extended stay, the resources of the lay community could be considerably stretched in the efforts to provide their bodily needs. But there were also substantial concerns among Church authorities that these wandering monks undermined their own efforts to preach a practical and enforceable approach to Christian doctrine within the cities. These monks who performed no manual labour, could actually seem to controvert other Christian principles regarding the need for every person to account for themselves within their society. In fact the differences of approach were often characterized by public denunciations of this brand of asceticism, the ascribing of the title 'heretic' to some of its chief practitioners, and occasionally civil unrest and street riots.

What C. paints is a picture of a Christian Church that is by no means homogeneous, and still very much in the process of establishing its own codes and systems. Problems were dealt with on a case by case basis, and new brands of heresy emerged as each new celebrity monk impacted on the public consciousness. It is a useful counterpoint to presentations of early Christianity as a triumphal and consolidated movement in the Roman Empire.

The strongest aspects of this work are the portraits and analyses of particular personalities such as Isaac of Constantinople, or Alexander the Sleepless. Indeed C.'s provision in his appendix of a translation and commentary on the Life of Alexander the Sleepless, brings a hitherto little known 'Life' to deserved attention. C. does an excellent job of exploring the implications of these personalities and their actions for their particular time and place. Perhaps it would have been easier on the reader had he curtailed the scope of his work somewhat however, since the range of the discussion can sometimes draw us away from the source material which is so powerful in its own right.

Dublin

AIDEEN HARTNEY